CASE STUDY: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya

Impressive Spanish map collection visible worldwide

The Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC) uses CONTENTdm to increase the visibility of its impressive map collection, while at the same time the often delicate and precious maps are preserved from damage by continual handling.

Solution

“After an assessment of a number of digital collection management solutions on the market, both ‘off-the-peg’ and proprietary,” says Rafael Roset, head of the ICC digital map library, “we chose and implemented CONTENTdm as the most comprehensive solution enabling libraries to store, manage and deliver their digital collections to the Web. CONTENTdm needs less tinkering to install than other solutions. It comes with a desktop cataloguing interface and was already being tested by another Catalan institution. And, last but not least,” adds Roset, “CONTENTdm proved to be by far the easiest to use for the library’s audience of civil servants, students, researchers, corporate staff and private citizens.”

The project to scan and digitize the old maps and photographs – started in 2002 – really took off in 2007 when a scanner that can handle originals up to double A0 size was acquired. Therefore the need to publish the scanned materials online grew. With the support of the Consortium of University Libraries of Catalunya (CBUC), who were already evaluating CONTENTdm, the first two ICC collections were created and published on the CBUC site. “When these two online collections proved to be a success,” continues Roset, “we decided to install CONTENTdm at our own site, particularly because of the large disk capacity needed to store images and maps scanned at 300 dpi.”

During 2007, CONTENTdm was installed and customised for ICC. A procedure was established which included the acquisition of the materials, cataloguing, digitisation, metadata export and uploading to the server.

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Result

The new catalogue went live in October 2007 at http://cartotecadigital.icc.cat. Just a year later, 15 different collections containing more than 10,000 images have been published and can be freely browsed and downloaded at high resolution. Roset explains: “The key to the success of this project has been the interdisciplinary team in the map library, where cataloguers, librarians, IT experts, image experts, scan operators and programmers all cooperated and contributed.”

The gains ICC hoped for – increasing the visibility of their unique paper collections and providing easy access to the public along with reducing the risk brought about by touching the old, delicate materials – have been achieved. At the moment visits to the digital collections outnumber visits to the map library 40:1. Approximately 1,800 different digital maps are downloaded monthly from the ICC website, whereas only 150 reproductions are requested of the map library in the same period of time. The queries by telephone and e-mail have increased by a factor of ten. And all these figures are growing on a monthly basis.

“On top of that,” concludes Roset, “we discovered that by going online with our collections, we were able to unearth and fix cataloguing and digitising errors that otherwise would have remained hidden.”

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